LIVE AT THE MARQUEE

DATE 16th & 17th JULY 1980 introduction
SUBJECT Live at the Marquee FORMAT CD & DVD

LOST AND FOUND

We recorded this live album over two nights, and we all look back on both evenings with a lot of affection and realise we are very fortunate to have such a wonderful permanent record of the event, courtesy of the recordings made by our label at the time, A&M records.

When the album was released late in 1980, the leading format was of course 12" vinyl and the optimum running time was around 25 minutes for each side. This gave us the problem of which songs from our live repertoire to leave out from the 21 played over the two nights.

It was such a difficult decision then, but we are pleased to now be able to share again the whole experience of playing that legendary and intimate venue.

It was a pleasure to revisit the 24 track 2" master tapes and produce the mixes of the seven extra tracks which did not make the original commercial release. A warm feeling emerged as we were taken back in time to mid July 1980 to finally complete some unfinished business.

We eventually decided that we would leave the first fourteen tracks just as they appeared on the original vinyl release, adding the newly mixed 'lost' tracks as an 'encore' experience.

It has also been a delight to be able to include a fantastic visual record of elements of those Marquee gigs, as around half of the song performances were captured on 16mm film.

If you were fortunate enough to be there at the shows, perhaps you will glimpse a much younger version of yourself in the middle of it all… if not, you will now get the chance to feel and see exactly what we saw and felt on those two memorable summer nights in 1980.

Enjoy.

DENNIS GREAVES

NINE BELOW ZERO... WORK, WORK AND WORK, HARD GRAFT - ON THE ROAD, THIS YEAR THEY WILL WORK AT LEAST 230 DATES ON THE CLUB & COLLEGE CIRCUIT. IF YOU'VE SEEN NINE BELOW ZERO YOU KNOW WHAT THEY PUT INTO A GIG. THEY COULD GET A MORGUE JUMPING. IF YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THEM, WATCH THIS CRACKING LIVE DVD OR LISTEN TO THIS CLASSIC ALBUM TO SOAK UP THE ELECTRIFYING ATMOSPHERE OF THE MARQUEE, 16th & 17th JULY, 1980.

DATE 16th & 17th JULY 1980
SUBJECT Live at the Marquee
the first year
FORMAT CD & DVD

FROM THE THOMAS A' BECKETT TO THE MARQUEE

On a warm summer's evening in 1979, I took my daughter Kate to a funfair in The Old Kent Road. Returning home past the Thomas A' Beckett pub, I noticed a row of Lambrettas and Vespas parked outside, and being an original Mod, I was intrigued. Why were these 60's icons parked there? I walked my daughter home and went back to investigate.

The pub was full of young Mods and up on the stage were a young band, belting out Chicago Blues with style. I was truly amazed. This was the kind of music I loved, I grew up on it, but they added pace, energy, and amazingly good playing. Dennis Greaves and Mark Feltham were the frontline, Mark's harp playing was outrageous, and Dennis played guitar with stunning verve, and fronted like a man possessed. His playing, movement and humour kept the crowd engaged all night. I loved every minute, and I immediately wanted to manage them. I found out, they were called Stan's Blues Band, my heart sank. I loved the band but not the name. After they finished, Dennis Greaves wandered past me at the bar, I asked him right there and then. 'Do you have a manager?' Dennis laughed and said. 'Who would want to manage us?' I took a sip and countered. 'I would!' I explained who I was, and how much I loved what they were doing. We exchanged numbers.

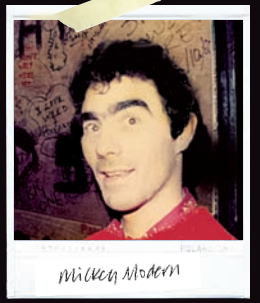
Within a week, I had booked a studio and we produced six tracks in one night. With some wheeling and dealing, the result of that night's work was that A&M Records offered an own label deal. M&L Records was formed and we chose four tracks for the band's first release. After the name change, we were on a mission to take the blues to the new wave generation. What happened next is now part of Nine Below Zero history. Seven EP's were delivered to Radio One. Amazingly, a week later I got a call from a producer. 'Could we have some more EP's please, everyone loves it.'

The lead track, 'Pack Fair And Square' was picked up first by Dave Lee Travis, and he played it every day for about a month, one day he played it twice! The EP sold really well. The band now had national exposure. Within a month we went from playing pubs for peanuts, to selling out University gigs, and eventually The Hammersmith Odeon. Europe opened up, and A&M Records ultimately signed the band.

Nine Below Zero didn't write many songs back then, but that didn't matter, the reputation was made from live performances, so the band's first album was to be a live recording, and there was only one venue in London that fitted the bill... the Marquee! We were all very excited; I knew this was going to be a special record. We played two sell out nights and both were recorded to make sure we had the choice of performances. As executive producer, I worked closely with Phil Harding the Marquee studio guru. We placed ambient microphones all over the venue to capture the energy. The stage was set, and a crew was booked to film the performance for a European promo film. My only instruction to the band was to ignore the cameras, and go out and enjoy the experience, and they did.

By the end of the second night, we knew we had captured the atmosphere, the excitement, and two great performances. 'Live at the Marquee' sold incredibly well and charted several times both here and in Europe during the next year or so! I'm proud to say it still sounds amazing.

The first year was hard graft, but great fun. I cannot remember a time when we were not laughing. When I say we, I mean the band, the management, and our brilliant young crew of south London Mods.



The world and the music business has changed a lot since those days, but not Nine Below Zero... they remain the best blues/R'n'B band around.

MICKEY MODERN

DATE 16th & 17th JULY 1980 On the Road...
OBJECT Live at the Marquee FORMAT CD & DVD

TO THE MARQUEE, 1980

I remember clearly when Nine Below Zero graduated from Pub Level to Club Level... I had to pay to get in!

For around a year, me and my old school pals had been dependable regulars at the band's modest, but enthusiastically attended pub appearances down the Old Kent Road, Deptford and Bermondsey and the rest of 'Saarf' London. Then all of a sudden, they'd gone all 'Up West' - leaving their many week-night residencies to be filled by the likes of The Ruts, The Fabulous Poodles and a band formed by the original bass player from Squeeze.Now, as good as these varied and colourful characters were, we eventually found ourselves missing our weekly lessons in lightning-fast R'n'B and ballsy blues. So it was decided on a warm night in July 1980 - up West we'd go...

Not a completely new experience, but all the same a bit of a hike and, as under-age drinkers (one and all), a bit of a gamble. We knew we'd had it good with the no-nonsense landlords on our own turf: veteran publicans who were willing to turn a blind eye to me and my merry band of fresh-faced friends in exchange for selling an extra two dozen light ales a night (so long as you kept a low profile and your nose clean, naturally).

We'd read in the New Musical Express that Nine Below Zero were playing a two-nighter at the Marquee Club on the 16th and 17th, so opting for the Thursday night's show, we clambered aboard Bermondsey's only means of transport across the river - the No.1 bus - and headed out (all a tad miffed at the thought of the admission fee cutting into our modest beer budget!) Blimey! We'd been turning out for Dennis, Mark, Kenny and Pete (admittedly for free) since their days as Stan's Blues Band, and now we were going to be short a couple of rounds in order to get in to see them!

Tools

Still, we hadn't seen the band for a few months so, as the bus wound its way around the Elephant & Castle on-route up west, a bit of a beano vibe kicked in. We finally disembarked on Oxford Street and wandered down Wardour Street towards the club - fully expecting to pay our money and breeze on in to the normal cheery waves from Dennis and the lads. Oh no, not tonight mate!

Marquee Crowd!

The Marquee box office had a queue stretching two to three deep way ahead of us, and there wasn't a single face we recognised! These were strangers - a bleedin' lot of them, and judging by their conversations, all a lot more clued up on the current events concerning our hometown heroes. Not least the fact that the band were recording their debut album over their two night stint.

I'd been to the Marquee a handful of times previously so I thought I knew what to expect, yet swapping the cool evening air for the heat and smoke-filled humidity of that first room bar always felt like a new experience. Your shoes would stick to the knobbly rubber flooring; the condensation would turn your hair frizzy, and the smell from the bogs would stay with you long after you'd left the building. It wasn't nice, but it was always exciting. The scrum at the first tiny bar made it essential to bulk buy and stock your parka pockets with as many little half pint tins of Carling Black Label as possible and then jostle into your spot in the main room. Within minutes you'd be sweating like a pit pony.

Tonight the club was packed to full capacity (and then some), and all were chanting the band's name. They'd come a long way since the Apples & Pears in Bermondsey, I thought. Then the Muddy Waters' track 'Nine Below Zero' boomed from the PA and the chanting grew louder and louder. I was impressed to say the least! Suddenly the little door to the left of the stage flew open and out they bounded. New drummer, new suits, new hat and new bloody attitude and swagger!

A quick intro and straight into 'Tore Down': the crowd went nuts. Then a new number, 'Straighten Her Out' (described later in the NME as Chas 'n' Dave on speed). This was followed by the new single 'Homework'. NEW SINGLE!!! My God, this was serious stuff. Now, we'd always known that Dennis and Mark were superb musicians from the minute we heard them. They had a maturity and an air of authority about themselves that was palpable. They also had this incredible knowledge of R'n'B and the blues that simply belied their tender years and made them seem much older than us. Yes, we knew they were good! And now it seemed the whole of London had cottoned onto that fact too; they also knew all the words! Something had happened to the band in those few months since we'd seen them last; they were now somehow bigger and better, even larger than life. The songs - even the new ones - seemed bigger and better too. They'd always had the knack of adapting a great blues tune and putting their own spin on it, but now they were making them their own. Some of the old songs we knew well were still in the set, but they'd revved them up to 11 - fast enough to give The Ramones a run for their money.

From that moment on, we realised we'd lost something we'd once thought exclusive to ourselves... now we had to share it. We all gave each other a smug nod. Then, when Dennis paid homage to his Old Kent Road roots during 'Watch Yourself' and 'Mojo Working', little tins of Carling were raised in respect. There would be other live recordings of Nine Below Zero, but nothing has ever come close to just how incredibly exciting that atmospheric and sweaty Thursday night in July 1980 was. However, you now get the chance to come close to experiencing just how good it was. PLAY LOUD!

TERRY RAWLINGS

Dennis Greaves and I first met at Walworth School in the Old Kent Road, when we were both aged around 13 or 14, and a friendship was forged from our mutual support of the mighty Spurs.

Having been in various school bands Dennis eventually formed Stan's Blues Band and regular gigs were established at the world famous Thomas A' Beckett in London's 'fashionable' Old Kent Road on Monday and Tuesday nights at the not so world famous Apples and Pears somewhere on the Bermondsey / Rotherhithe borders.

Just to fill in a bit of historical background at this point, London was a much richer place in terms of smaller music venues. Monday nights after the Becket gig would often be followed by a trip to the Vortex club in Wardour Street to see some obscure punk band. Other places offering live music seven nights a week night, included The Rock Garden, The Venue, The Golden Lion, Hope and Anchor, Dingwalls and, of course, The Marquee.

Many of these venues played a very important role in the life and times of Stan's Blues Band, later to become Nine Below Zero. It was the Becket gigs where the band served their musical apprenticeship and the buzz created by the band allowed them to move onwards and upwards to some of the more prestigious venues already mentioned.

With the appointment of management and a name change to Nine Below Zero the band releases a 4 track extended play 45 on the M&L Record Label (The same EP is later pressed on the A&M Label). I had a keen interest in photography at the time and my images from a Dingwalls gig became the picture sleeve for the disc. I do get a name check in very small letters on the back of the sleeve, but to date, no actual cash payment!

With a record contract in place the next move would be to record an album.

The Marquee 1964 -1988 was located at 90 Wardour Street, right in the middle of Soho night life. A club steeped in history and its importance in the development of bands and the London music scene cannot be underestimated. Who played there? Well, on its opening night, 13th March 1964, Sonny Boy Williamson, Long John Baldry and the Yardbirds. From then on it's a list of the most influential artists in the history of British music.

My own memories of the Marquee, it was always stiflingly hot, it had a strange cooked burger smell, your feet stuck to what little carpet was left on the floor, smoking was allowed, and bands definitely played louder. But it was always THE place to play.

So, over 2 glorious summer nights in July 1980, a few nights after Iron Maiden and U2, and a few nights before the Fall play the very same venue, Live at the Marquee is recorded by the Nine Below Zero of Dennis, Mark, Pete and Stix. Frantic, fast paced Rhythm and Blues played to a packed Marquee club. The walls of the club that have soaked up so much musical history are running with the sweat of the crowd, witnessing the recording of one of the all time classic live albums.

DAVE CROCKWELL

One of my Favourite styles of music in my late teens and early twenties was Blues Rock. I was also one of many recording engineers that the Marquee (and various record companies) employed to record gigs at the club. I was delighted when I got the chance to record Nine Below Zero.

I had got to know their manager Mickey Modern a little bit and my memory of the Marquee gig was "Wow, what a blinding set!"

It was a typical sweaty night in the club and once we got beyond the technicalities of the earlier sound check, I remember everything going smoothly. A great recording of one of the best live bands, on the scene, at that time, in my humble opinion.

PHIL HARDING -
PRODUCER & ENGINEER ON THE MARQUEE RECORDINGS

At the end of the seventies and into the eighties live music was in abundance - pubs, clubs, universities, theatres, everywhere. So you had to be good to be noticed. The Marquee was one of those venues that everyone loved, and Nine Below Zero were (and still are) an amazing live band. For me working with the band was like being part of a family - the fans, crew (who were fans) and the band - all mixed before & after gigs. The atmosphere created by their performances and the anticipation of their shows was always palpable.

I remember the mix-down (of the recordings) in the rooms at the back of the venue, and one comment in particular from producer / engineer Phil Harding, "We need a piano fill in this bit." "But we don't have a piano player!" came the band's response... Classic! You won't find a better live album that captures the energy and fun of London and the UK's music scene at a very special time.

DENNIS RATCLIFF - ROADIE

I can remember Dennis jumping off the stage, duckwalking through the crowd, he then took off his guitar and handed it to one of the audience at the back of the Marquee and went for a comfort break in the gents! He came back, grabbed his guitar and carried on with a blinding solo... Great memories.

JOHN THE THATCHER

I was 17 when saw Nine Below Zero play 'Live at the Marquee' and even now, 30 years later, it is still one of the most powerful and visceral gigs I ever attended. Listening to the 'Live at the Marquee' album transports me back to that hot, dark, pumping basement in Wardour Street, the throbbing bass making my heart race. The tight swinging rhythms and the driving tempo had the whole venue dancing and jumping. The album captures the live atmosphere and authentic experience of the London Blues scene of the early 80's like no other. Dennis' gritty vocals perfectly paired with Mark's soaring, sexy harp. The blues guitar rocking the house on 'Wooly Bully' and tearing at your heart strings in 'I Can't Quit You Baby'. The audience interacting with the band made them an integral part of the show.

If you want to immerse yourself in a musical experience that reminds you how good it is to be alive, you've now got it, the extended version of 'Live at the Marquee', but make sure you have your dancing shoes on!

ESME CHILTON

I was able to get in to The Marquee on the second night of the two landmark gigs. None of my mates were into Rhythm & Blues at the time so I went on my own, as I did to many gigs. I was heavily influenced by Dr Feelgood and then Nine Below came along and just blew me away. The venue was heaving, I can't remember who supported, could have been The Untouchables or Fast Eddie? Dennis' opening words, 'Don't know if you know, but we're recording our album here tonight' and away they went. Brilliant from start to finish. Bundling to the front in my jacket and tie, I finished up looking like someone had thrown a bucket of water over me. Dennis climbed the PA and sat on top playing guitar, he also wandered through the audience, putting his safety to one side. I decided to shout out something to get on the recording, so just before 'I Can't Quit You Baby' I shouted 'Eddie!' knowing no one in the band had that name. If you listen carefully just after Dennis announces the song and before they start I'm sure you can hear it! I (and everyone else) left The Marquee that evening well and truly knackered but on a musical high. The album's release couldn't happen soon enough for me, I bought my copy as soon as it was available and still have it to this day.

ANDY MORTON

I will remember the recording of the live album at the Marquee for all time. It ranks as one of the best gigs I have ever been to. Just listening to the music again, now, all the memories come flooding back, the audience noise, the energy, the sweat, the black walls of the Marquee, the pure adrenaline. Dennis' guitar, Mark's harmonica, the crowd going crazy and the feeling of never wanting it to end! You've made a 50 year old man very happy with this release.

ANDY CUTLER

Ah, July 1980, how can I forget it? I was 17 and my parents were so mad to allow me to travel alone (from Italy) to London for a month, with just some keys to a friend's house. It was to be the best summer of all my life, truly! I befriended two other Italians I had met and along with them attended many London concerts. One evening they suggested "Let's go to the Marquee!" The Marquee, the place where almost every band I loved had started their career. "Ok, who is playing?" "A new group that is coming through, Nine Below Zero." It was the most devastating, fantastic concert, an incredible crowd, I can still recall the noise they made when the band reached the stage. I'm eager to see the DVD, because I was so close to the stage, I might even be on it.

I returned home and some months later the LP arrived in my home town record shop. I have that and several CD versions (and all other NBZ albums) and I will be a NBZ fan forever. They are always in heavy rotation in my car and no week passes without listening to them. I look forward to seeing them play in Italy soon.

ANDREA TOLIN

DISC 1: ORIGINAL ALBUM - LIVE AT THE MARQUEE

1. TORE DOWN (THOMPSON)
2. STRAIGHTEN HER OUT (GREAVES, CLARKE, FELTHAM, BURKEY)
3. HOMEWORK (PERKINS,CLARK)
4. I CAN'T HELP MYSELF (HOLLAND, DOZIER, HOLLAND)
5. CAN I GET A WITNESS (HOLLAND, DOZIER, HOLLAND)
6. RIDIN' ON THE L&N (HAMPTON)
7. I CAN'T QUIT YOU BABY (DIXON)
8. STOP YOUR NAGGIN' (GREAVES)
9. HOOTCHIE COOTCHIE COO (BALLARD)
10. WOOLY BULLY (SAMUDIO)
11. GOT MY MOJO WORKING (PRESTON, FOSTER)
12. PACK FAIR & SQUARE (PRICE)
13. WATCH YOURSELF (JACOBS)
14. SWING JOB (GREAVES, CLARKE, FELTHAM, BURKEY)

ENCORE!

15. ROCKET 88 (TURNER)
16. (JUST A) LITTLE BIT (THORNTON, THOMPSON, BASS, WASHINGTON, BROWN)
17. TWENTY YARDS BEHIND (JOHNSON)
18. STORMY MONDAY (WALKER)
19. IS THAT YOU (GREAVES)
20. KEEP ON KNOCKING (BRADFORD)
21. MADISON BLUES (JAMES)

DISC 2: DVD - LIVE AT THE MARQUEE PERFORMANCE FOOTAGE

1. TORE DOWN (THOMPSON)
2. HOMEWORK (PERKINS, CLARK)
3. (JUST A) LITTLE BIT (THORNTON, THOMPSON, BASS, WASHINGTON, BROWN)
4. I CAN'T HELP MYSELF (HOLLAND, DOZIER, HOLLAND)
5. CAN I GET A WITNESS (HOLLAND, DOZIER, HOLLAND)
6. HOOTCHIE COOTCHIE COO (BALLARD)
7. IS THAT YOU (GREAVES)
8. KEEP ON KNOCKING (BRADFORD)

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